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Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

Letter dated 18 October 2012 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with instructions received from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 5 October 2012 from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Argentina (A/67/513).

The Government of the Republic of Argentina continues to make unfounded claims that the United Kingdom is "militarizing" the South Atlantic. The Government of the United Kingdom unequivocally rejects these false assertions. The United Kingdom's defence posture in the South Atlantic has remained unchanged for many years.

The United Kingdom carries out routine biannual exercises involving short range air defence missiles on the Falkland Islands. These missiles were positioned on the Falkland Islands as a defensive measure following the Republic of Argentina's illegal invasion and occupation of the Islands in 1982. This year such exercises were carried out in July and October. As the Republic of Argentina is well aware, these exercises have been conducted safely for 30 years, and at no point has the safety of life at sea been put at risk. Such exercises are routine and consistent with the rights of all States. Indeed, the United Kingdom reminds the Republic of Argentina that its own military exercises also include live firing out to sea.

The United Kingdom responded in detail on 22 February 2012 (A/66/706) to the false claims made by the Republic of Argentina in its presentation on 10 February 2012. The United Kingdom response made clear the routine nature of the biannual exercises referred to above. It also confirmed the United Kingdom's position with regard to nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom ratified the Protocols to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Treaty of Tlatelolco) in 1969, and it fully respects these obligations. The United Kingdom position on its nuclear deterrent is unambiguous: the United Kingdom will not use — or threaten to use — nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to, and in compliance with, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

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Treaty. The United Kingdom is disappointed that the Republic of Argentina continues to make completely unfounded allegations of increased militarization of the South Atlantic, despite this detailed response. It is these frequent and unfounded allegations made by the Republic of Argentina that raise tensions in the region — not the United Kingdom's defence posture, which has remained unchanged for many years.

The Republic of Argentina illegally invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982 and did not comply with the Security Council resolutions calling on it to withdraw its forces peacefully. The Republic of Argentina continues to pursue hostile measures to isolate the Islands and damage their economy. The United Kingdom military presence in the South Atlantic is defensive. It is designed purely to protect and preserve the Falkland Islanders' right of self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

As part of the United Kingdom's defence posture, the Royal Navy has a continuous presence in the South Atlantic. The current deployment of *HMS Edinburgh* to the South Atlantic has been long planned as a replacement of another ship on station, and is entirely routine. Her deployment is not, as the Republic of Argentina implies, an increase of the United Kingdom's naval presence in the region.

The United Kingdom Government attaches great importance to the principle of self-determination as set out in Article 1.2 of the Charter of the United Nations and common article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That principle underlies our position. There can be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the Islanders so wish. However, the United Kingdom remains willing to engage in regular military-to-military discussions, communications and confidence-building measures as envisaged under various Joint Statements issued since 1982. The United Kingdom calls on the Republic of Argentina to desist from the adoption of hostile measures aimed at isolating the Falkland Islanders.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 45.

(*Signed*) Philip **Parham**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.